CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
CONGRÈS DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

REPRESENTING OFF-RESERVE STATUS & NON-STATUS INDIANS, MÉTIS AND INUIT OF SOUTHERN LABRADOR

THE INDIGENOUS VOICE

2017

Mobilizing Change

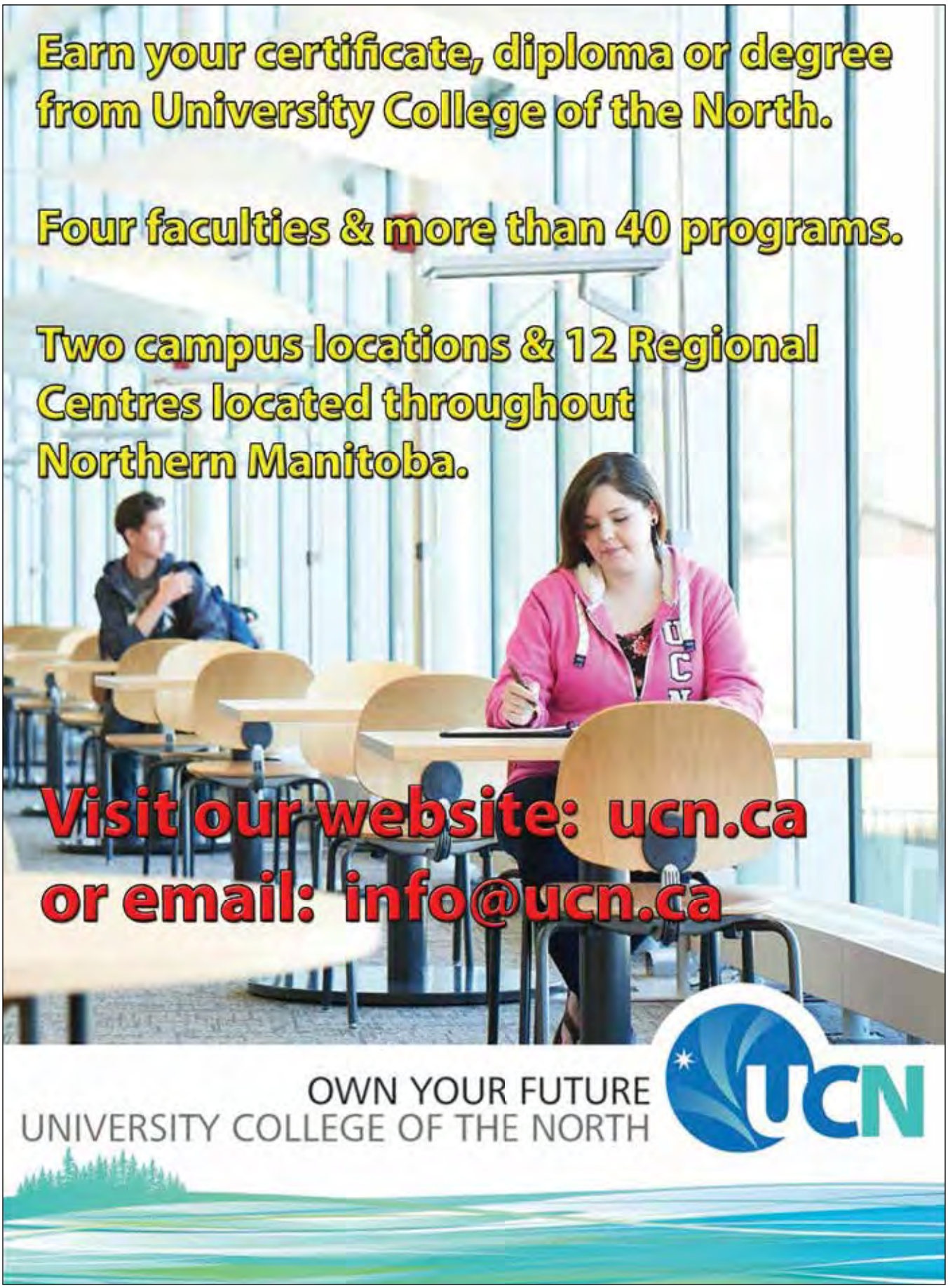
THE *DANIELS SYMPOSIUM*

The first step toward reconciliation

Anish Success

Meet Indigenous Entrepreneur Matthew Smith




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VOLUME 2

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on the cover



Photo: Sarah Decontie from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg dancing at the *Daniels Symposium*

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples speaks with constituents from across the country about the importance of the *Daniels* decision and its future impacts for our community.

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photo Jean-Marc Carisse



Welcome

to our latest edition of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples' new magazine – *The Indigenous Voice*.

We are so very pleased to present this magazine to the general public and in particular to the Métis, Non-Status / Status Indians and Inuit peoples living off-reserve whom we represent.

This edition of *The Indigenous Voice* reflects this new era of reconciliation occurring within the Indigenous space across Canada and will speak to the many issues facing our communities.

Inside you will find information about the very important inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), updates to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision *Daniels v. Canada*, stories on our Creative Leaders Symposium and Grass Roots Tour and many more interesting and provocative articles.

The Indigenous Voice focuses on the changing dynamics of the Indigenous communities in Canada. Read about the many initiatives that are happening in our community and the great work being undertaken by the Congress to advocate on behalf of our people.

We are excited to share this informative publication with you and hope you enjoy the content and will take away new knowledge to help you on your personal journey of reconciliation.

Meegwetc,
Chief Robert Bertrand

Bienvenue

à la toute dernière édition du nouveau magazine: *"Voix Autochtone"* créé par le Congrès des Peuples Autochtones.

Nous sommes heureux de présenter cette publication au grand public ainsi qu'à la communauté Métis, indiens inscrits/non-inscrits et inuits résidant en milieu urbain.

Cette édition de *"Voix Autochtone"* reflète une nouvelle ère axée sur le principe de la réconciliation qui d'ailleurs, prend rapidement de l'essor dans la sphère autochtone à l'échelle du pays. De plus, cette dernière touchera aux diverses réalités et problématiques que nos communautés doivent affrontées quotidiennement.

À l'intérieur de ce magazine, vous trouverez de l'information concernant l'importante enquête sur les femmes autochtones assassinées et disparues, concernant le jugement *Daniels*; récemment émis par la Court Suprême du Canada, concernant les histoires personnels des participants au Symposium "Creative Leaders", concernant la tournée "Grass roots" ainsi qu'une panoplie d'articles intéressants et provocateurs.

La Voix Autochtone met l'emphase sur le changement de dynamiques à l'intérieur des communautés autochtones à travers le Canada. Informez-vous sur les diverses initiatives en cours présentement dans nos communautés et l'excellent travail mené par le Congrès pour représenter les intérêts de nos membres.

Nous sommes fiers de vous présentez cette publication, riche en informations. De plus, nous espérons que vous apprécierez le contenu et que ceci contribuera à votre culture générale et cheminement personnel au sein de cette ère de réconciliation.

Meegwetc,
Chief Robert Bertrand

THE INDIGENOUS VOICE

The Indigenous Voice is the official publication of the Congress Of Aboriginal Peoples. As one of only five national Aboriginal representative organizations recognized by the Government of Canada, CAP advocates for the rights and interests of Métis people, non-status/status Indians living-off reserve and the Inuit of Southern Labrador. CAP represents the interests of its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations.

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CREATIVE LEADERS

- Calling on Canadian business to do their part for reconciliation

By Rob Russell

Ottawa, ON - Speaking during the 2017 Creative Leaders symposium Dr. Marie Wilson, former commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), called on the business community to do its part for reconciliation. Wilson made clear that in order to achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, business must play an important role.

Wilson was the keynote speaker for the symposium, which brings

> "in order to achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, business must play an important role"

the Indigenous and non-Indigenous business communities together. The annual event focuses primarily on creating innovative business strategies to foster better social and economic conditions for Indigenous peoples throughout Canada.

Wilson emphasized the importance of events like Creative Leaders, identifying a number of areas where business can bolster reconciliation. As good practice, she says, businesses must begin with individual statements of principle for reconciliation. Wilson highlighted the following ten areas:

1. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should serve as a framework for reconciliation.

2. First Nations, Inuit and Métis people have rights. They have treaty rights which must be respected and recognized.

3. Reconciliation is a process of healing relationships, which requires truth sharing and apologies, as well as commemoration and redress.

4. Reconciliation requires action to address the various impacts on education, language and culture, health and child welfare, the administration of justice and, most importantly, economic opportunities and prosperity.

5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable society and focus on closing opportunity gaps.

6. All Canadians are treaty people and share responsibility for mutually respectful relationships.



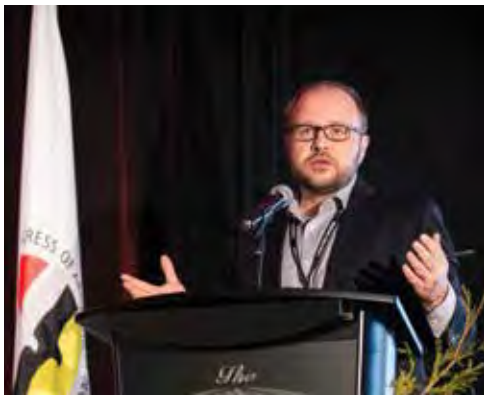
Dr. Marie Wilson speaking during the 2017 Creative Leaders Symposium.

7. The perspective of Aboriginal Elders and knowledge-keepers regarding concepts and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.

8. The Aboriginal cultural revitalization and the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws and protocols are vital to the reconciliation process.

9. Reconciliation requires political will in order to convene government representatives as well as joint leadership and trust building. There has to be investment of resources.







Speaking during the 2017 Creative Leaders Symposium, left to right: National Chief Bertrand, The Congress's CEO, Jim Devoe, Catherine Debassige of Business Development Canada.

10. Reconciliation as a principle requires sustained public education: we can't allow ourselves to get tired of hearing the story.

This year was the Congress' third annual Creative Leaders symposium. The theme "Indigenous Community Economic Development Corporations" provided attendees with insights into the benefits of creating community owned business structures. In particular, it presented people with pathways to begin the process of developing these institutions. Creating these types of organizations will be key for Indigenous communities to become sustainable and independent.

This year's symposium highlighted many of the benefits of community-based development for both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous business communities. As a result of such practices, both groups stand to see increased economic activity, more support for new business and business processes, increased access to services, greater levels of inequity and inclusiveness, conserve heritage and increased general well-being. Many more benefits were highlighted by presenters who came from various areas of the community economic development spectrum. These presenters were consistent in acknowledging that Indigenous business development is key to the success of all Canadians.



Speaking during the 2017 Creative Leaders Symposium, left: Shannin Metatawabin, CEO, National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, Top Right: VP, Brenda Zurba, Aski Financial, Bottom Right: CEO, Andy Turbull, Nunacor Development Corporation.









ANISH SUCCESS

By Nigel Newlove

Most young men don't picture themselves working out of their parents' basement shortly after taking a bio-chemistry course; however Mathew Smith is an exception. The 25-year-old Anishnabe entrepreneur is the proud owner and operator of Anish Moon Therapy. The business provides therapeutic massage services and produces a line of body care products.

The young entrepreneur is inspired by his clients. "That satisfaction on their face that they want to book an appointment right away, right after, or buying a product and saying I love the smell," says Smith. "I'm planning on going into acupuncture next year."

After losing interest in a bio-chemistry career, Smith became involved in massage therapy when his mother enrolled in a course. Smith completed the 400-hour training course and got a job at a local spa. But he struggled to stay afloat financially. He needed help. That's when Smith contacted the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and discovered the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). "Game changer, game changer," says Smith while describing the program. "It's so important, and I think it's probably more important than funding post-secondary."

ASETS delivers skills training programming for Indigenous Peoples living off reserve. It also provides support and information to employers looking to fill positions. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has been delivering employment training programs to urban and off reserve Indigenous Peoples since 1999.

ASETS helped Smith get Anish Moon off the ground, but he says it wasn't easy. "That first year, first two years depending on what kind of business you're working long hours, some of those hours you're not seeing any revenue." Nonetheless, Smith persevered. Now, two years after launching, Smith is building his clientele and making long-term plans. "Next year a clinic with three rooms, four or five staff – in five years I'd like the clinic to have osteotherapy, massage, naturopathy and acupuncture," says Smith. "Short-term pain, long-term gain."

Smith's early struggles is indicative of the climate facing young Indigenous peoples. In 2011, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was over twice the national rate (13% vs. 6%.) and unemployment rate for Aboriginal youth age 20-24 living off-reserve was even higher at 22.6%. It's those kinds of figures that inspire Randy Martin, Senior Manager of ASETS at the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, to endorse the program. "Many Indigenous Peoples face daunting challenges when trying to join the workforce," says Martin. "ASETS is the bridge between job seekers and employers."

> "Many Indigenous Peoples face daunting challenges when trying to join the workforce"

The ASETS program had been slated for a five-year renewal in 2014-15, but due to difficulties in meeting critical timelines, the program has been extended on a yearly basis. The current agreement expires March 2018, and Indigenous organizations are expecting some type of announcement prior to that. After three one-year extensions, the future of Aboriginal labour market programming may finally be here.

Meanwhile, Smith is enjoying the fruits of his hard work. "Working for myself, somewhat deciding my own schedule is a great feeling."

Anyone interested in learning more about the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Strategy is encouraged to contact the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples or a provincial affiliate.



Linking Skilled Workers with Employers

ASETS and Individuals

- Career Planning
- Skills Training
- Work Experience
- Self-Employment Assistance
- Finding a job

ASETS and Employers

- Strategies to address labour shortages
- Shared financing to train new employees
- Matching employer needs with skilled staff
- Support industry recognized or customized employer skills training
- Increase workplace inclusion, diversity and retention
- Raise profile with urban Aboriginal communities

Partnerships

The Congress is looking to establish skills training partnerships with businesses and employers. If you are interested please contact the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples ASETS department.

Contact

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867 St. Laurent Blvd
Ottawa, ON K1K-3B1

Tel: 613 747-6022
Web: abo-peoples.org
Email: info@abo-peoples.org
Toll Free: 1-888-997-9927

CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
CONGRÈS DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES



STEERING THE SHIP

By Nigel Newlove

Chief Bertrand speaking at parliament hill to community members during a ceremony to commemorate the *Daniels v. Canada* decision

A A well-dressed young woman hurries the Chief into a dimly-lit studio. Seconds later, the "on air" light flashes red. It's National Aboriginal Day.

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples National Chief Robert Bertrand is being shuffled from one studio to another. Today, reporters want to know about his support for a private member's bill proposing National Aboriginal Day be made a statutory holiday in Canada."It's a chance for Canadians to learn more about Indigenous culture," Chief Bertrand tells the host. "It's time Canadians learn about residential schools, treaties and our rich cultures."

It's not the Chief's first time in the spotlight. In 1993, Bertrand put his name on a federal ballot running for the Liberal Party of Canada in the Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle riding of Quebec. But Bertrand's interest in politics was sparked years before, as a young child growing up in Fort-Coulonge, QC. "The MP for the area at the time was a very nice gentleman called Tom Lefebvre," Bertrand says. "He lived up in (the nearby community of) Davidson. Whenever there was a meeting or something he would ask me to go with him and I'd set up the chairs. After the meeting was over I'd have to sweep the floor and stack the chairs in the corner."

Those humble beginnings became the foundation for an eleven-year career as a Member of Parliament. Bertrand won three different elections with commanding numbers. He was an active member, sitting on several committees and eventually serving as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Defence. But it wasn't until Bertrand left Parliament Hill that he began unearthing his Indigenous roots and getting involved in the community. "I discovered both sides of my family had deep Indigenous roots in the area," Bertrand says. "That's when I got involved in the Native Alliance of Quebec (NAQ) and started advocating for our rights."

In 2011, Bertrand was elected President of the NAQ and served until 2016 when he was elected National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP). Since then, he has made the Supreme Court of Canada's *Daniels v. Canada* decision the focus of his efforts. "The *Daniels* decision reinforces what I've always believed: that off reserve Indigenous Peoples have the same rights as status Indians," Bertrand says. "Now we must ensure the government recognizes that and provides the same programming and supports as they do for status Indians."

Meanwhile back in studio, the "on air" light dims and the Chief emerges from the interview. "How was that?" Bertrand asks the young assistant. "Good," she replies. "Alright, three more to go," Bertrand jokes.

National Chief Robert Bertrand is one year into his four-year term. He has a clear vision where he hopes CAP will be in three years. "If we can start negotiations with the government regarding *Daniels*, I think I'll be able to say that the ship has been pointed in the right direction and another captain can take it further."



Chief Bertrand addressing the crowd at a ceremony on Parliament Hill celebrating *Daniels v. Canada* court decision.



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National Inquiry Into MMIWG

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) will be examining and reporting on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada by looking at patterns and underlying factors. They will do this through taking statements in public hearings, private hearings, sharing circles, or through art forms such as songs, poems, and paintings.

Summer & Fall 2017 Schedule:

Location	Community Visits (week of)	Community Hearings (week of)
Smithers, BC	July 17th	September 25th
Winnipeg, MB	July 24th	October 16th
Halifax, NS	August 14th	October 30th
Edmonton, AB	September 5th	November 6th
Yellowknife, NT	August 28th	November 13th
Saskatoon, SK	August 7th	November 20th
Maliotenam, QC	August 28th	November 27th
Thunder Bay, ON	September 11th	December 4th
Rankin Inlet, NU	August 14th	December 11th



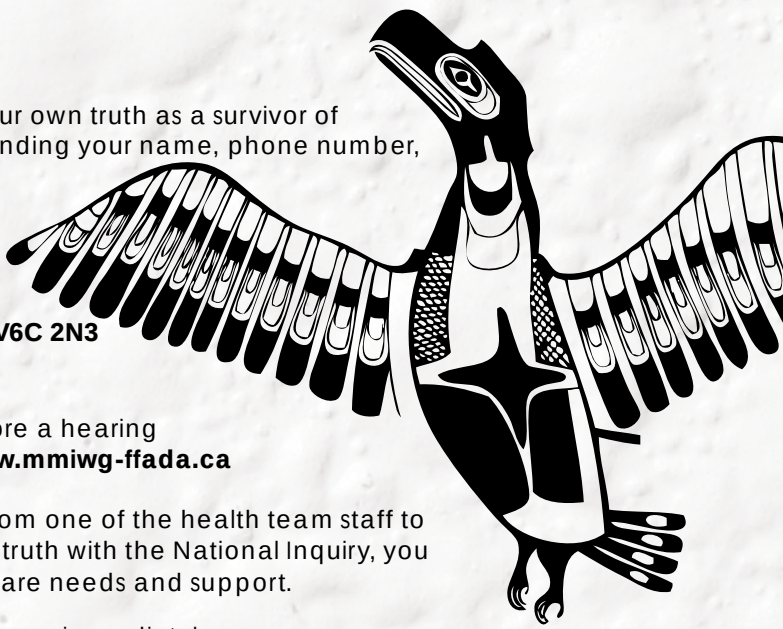
Upcoming Expert Hearings:

Week of August 21, 2017
Indigenous Laws & Decolonizing Practices/ Perspectives in Winnipeg, MB

Week of October 2, 2017
Human Rights, International Law & UNDRIP in Montreal, QC

How Families Can Participate:

If you want to share your story of a lost loved one(s) or your own truth as a survivor of violence with the National Inquiry, you can register by sending your name, phone number, email, and location in one of the following ways:



- By phone toll free at **1-844-348-4119**
- By fax at **604-775-5009**
- By mail at **PO Box 500, Station A – Vancouver BC V6C 2N3**
- By mail at **profile@mmiwg-ffada.ca**
- In-person during one of our community visits before a hearing which will be posted on our website at **http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca**

In a weeks' time, you will receive an initial email or call from one of the health team staff to set up a telephone meeting. After you have shared your truth with the National Inquiry, you will continue to work with the health team on your aftercare needs and support.

If you need to speak to someone immediately
please contact the 24/7 toll free support line at:
1-844-413-6649
(available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway & Inuktitut).



Food Skills for Families

– Making Connections through Food

The high cost of healthy groceries, lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables, limited cooking skills and nutrition knowledge are factors that affect people's decisions about the food they eat. Diabetes Canada's Food Skills for Families (FSF) program helps to break down barriers and remove some of the stress around making healthy eating choices. The program, which was developed with extensive input and collaboration from health-care providers and educators, connects people in the kitchen, teaches practical, hands-on cooking skills and makes healthy eating easy, enjoyable and affordable.

Supporting Aboriginal communities is a key priority of Diabetes Canada and the FSF program. These communities experience some of the highest rates of diabetes in Canada and face challenges in access and affordability of healthy foods. A recent partnership between Diabetes Canada and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), has brought FSF to Atlantic Canada and trained Aboriginal community members to lead the Aboriginal-focused version of the program, with plans to expand to communities across Canada.

In B.C., where FSF started in 2008, more than 2,700 people in Aboriginal communities have already participated in the program, and that number continues to grow. "We're hearing from participants that the program is helping them re-think the way they shop for food and make decisions about what they're eating," says Jill MacDonald, a FSF leader who works for Diabetes Canada. "People tell us they are eager to share the recipes they learn through the program and that they're adding more fruits and vegetables to their diets. Some even tell us that they have given up soda and are drinking more water. These types of small changes can have a big impact on someone's overall health and on the health of the family members they may be cooking for."

Another key factor in the program's success? An Aboriginal-focused curriculum, which was developed with input from the Aboriginal community. "We knew the program needed to be culturally appropriate in order to be successful. We included culturally appropriate foods and traditions based on the community, like storytelling and smudging," says MacDonald. "The program only works if it is embraced by the community and that won't happen unless what is being taught reflects the reality of that community."

In many Aboriginal communities, there are several challenges to healthy eating. Healthy food may be less available or be too expensive. Fresh fruits and vegetables may not be available year round. Specific ingredients may be difficult to find. Knowledge about how to cook specific foods may be lacking. Unhealthy, yet affordable options may be more accessible. FSF addresses these barriers by teaching practical skills and providing realistic alternatives to maintain a healthy diet.

Aboriginal people experience higher rates of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases, versus the general population, and therefore, increasing knowledge around healthy eating is essential to improving overall health. "We know that type 2 diabetes is more prevalent amongst Aboriginal people," says MacDonald. "Part of that is genetics, which we can't change. What we can do is help raise awareness of healthy lifestyle choices that can, in some cases, help to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes, or help someone manage their diabetes." That means programs such as FSF can improve overall health. FSF teaches skills to prepare and cook healthy meals while raising awareness about the risks of including too many unhealthy, easily available, less costly options in a diet. "This includes encouraging individuals to consume fewer sugar-sweetened beverages, which have been shown to have a direct impact on the development of type 2 diabetes," says MacDonald. "It's a small change that can have a big impact. For Diabetes Canada, these are critical issues that we want to tackle starting at the community level."

The expansion outside of BC of FSF began in Atlantic Canada and was such a success that Diabetes Canada and CAP are now working to offer the program in other Canadian communities. This is a strong first step in making positive change. "We truly could not bring this program forward without wonderful partners like the Congress," says MacDonald. "We are so appreciative that they see the benefit of expanding this program to support their communities."

For more information about FSF, or if you are interested in bringing the program to your community, contact the FSF program at Diabetes Canada (**foodskills@diabetes.ca**). To learn more about diabetes, visit **diabetes.ca** or call **1-800-BANTING**. For anyone interested in partnering with indigenous groups, please contact Robert Russell at the CAP (**r.russell@abo-peoples.org**).



Enjoying a meal at Bridge River Indian Band.

DIABETES CANADA

AN INSTRUMENT FOR RECONCILIATION:

The 20th Anniversary of the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

By Brad Darch

Upon its release in November 1996, the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) became a landmark document and a valuable instrument for the advancement of reconciliation for all Indigenous Peoples.

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) National Chief Robert Bertrand was invited to speak and participate in Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future, a dialogue and conference marking the 20th anniversary of RCAP which took place at the University of Winnipeg in November 2016.

In speaking to forum attendees, National Chief Bertrand chose to highlight the urgent issues which faced off-reserve Indigenous Peoples at the time of the report's publication in 1996. In doing so, Chief Bertrand emphasized that many of the same plights remain front and centre for today's generation. This illustrates the increased relevance of CAP continuing its advocacy for engagement, consultation and a renewed relationship with the Government of Canada in order to achieve true reconciliation.

The RCAP report states, "In urban centres, Aboriginal people from many nations form a minority of the population. They are not 'nations' in the way we define it, but they want a measure of self-government nevertheless - especially in relation to education, health care, economic development, and protection of their cultures." This in many ways, encapsulates the mandate of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

In reading through the RCAP Report, a distinct sense of déjà vu sets in regarding current Indigenous issues; in particular when the report addresses Indigenous People living off-reserve:

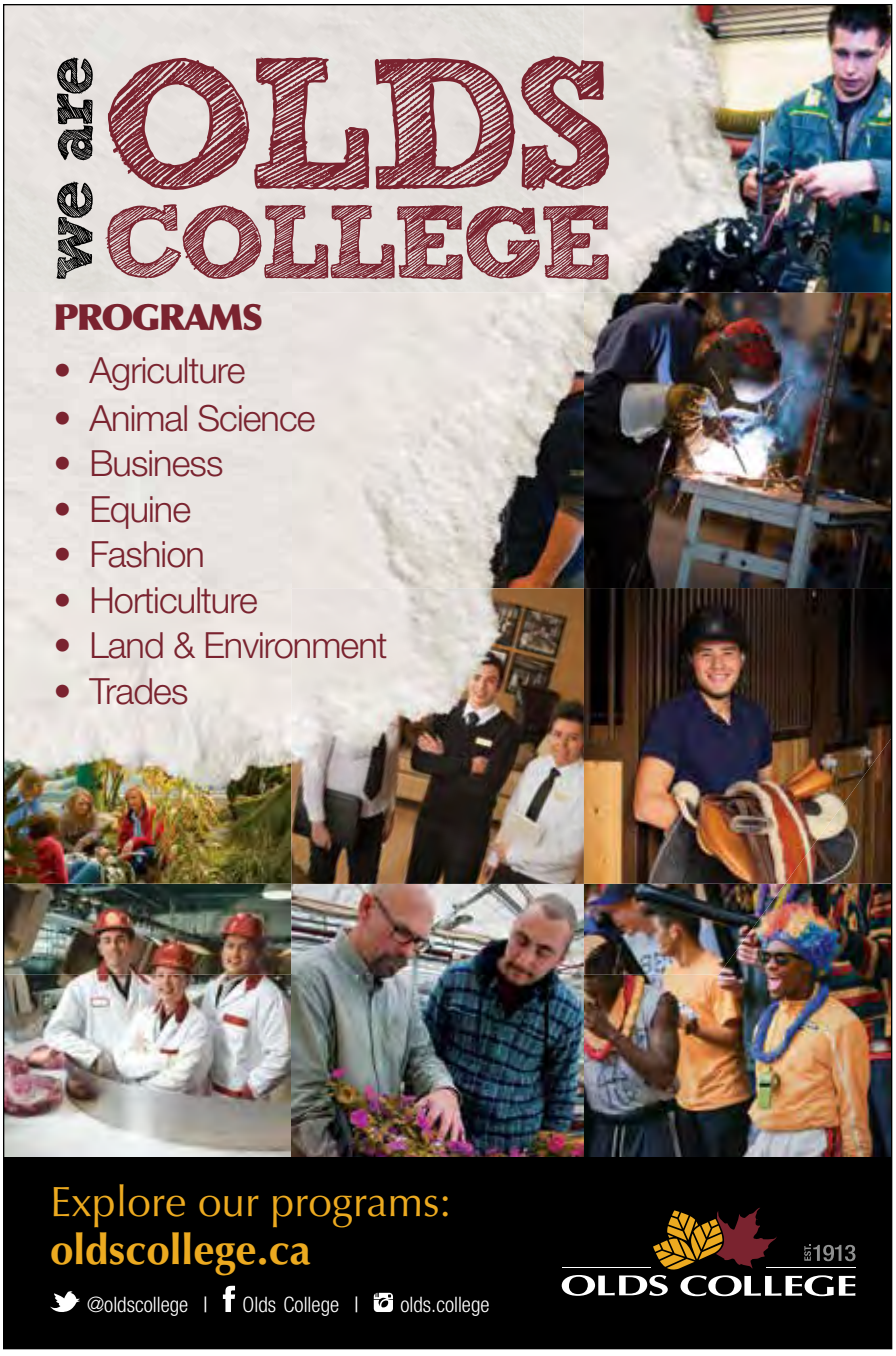
"Aboriginal people leave home to improve their education, look for work or escape family violence. If they have troubles, they may find urban services difficult to penetrate, alien in spirit and perhaps racist. Many make a successful transition. But others fall into the cracks between cultures, where they are isolated, unemployed and under-served."

The RCAP report also notes that, "Almost half of all the Aboriginal people in Canada live in urban areas… Many Canadians will find these facts surprising, and governments certainly appear to have given them little thought in policy and program decisions." While the RCAP report cites that in 1996 half of Indigenous People lived off-reserve, today's statistics estimate that number to be more than 70%.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was a necessary journey into the very heart of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples, the Government of Canada and the culture of the nation as a whole. Lasting four years, from 1992 to 1996, and culminating in a final report of 4000 pages with an astounding 440 recommendations, RCAP brought to light the fractured state of the Indigenous Peoples' relationship with government. It also became a benchmark that provided Indigenous organizations with a foundation from which they could build their own mandates and vision in regards to reconciliation, advocacy and government engagement.

Looking back on RCAP twenty years later, it would be easy to dwell upon the number of recommendations that have gone unheeded. RCAP co-chair George Erasmus proposed that there should be a "comprehensive strategy over 20 years to restore social, economic and political health to Aboriginal peoples and rebuild their relationship with all Canadians." A sense of irony cannot be lost when we hear this and stop to ask ourselves, "Has it been twenty years already?"

The complete restoration of the social, economic and political health to Indigenous Peoples is still an ongoing daily issue. Statistics Canada reports our people as being represented as the worst in every social economic indicator: the poorest, the unhealthiest, the most un-employed and under-employed, the highest incarceration rates, highest family and domestic violence. The list goes on and on.



While it remains a well-worn cliché, we can either look at the current situation of Indigenous People in Canada as a glass being half empty or half full.

The theme of the RCAP Anniversary Forum was "Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future: Realizing the promise, facing the challenge of reconciliation." Two words from this theme inextricably represent the seeds that RCAP has continued to sow over the last twenty years: future and reconciliation.

There have been a number of important steps towards a mutually beneficial reconciliation between Indigenous Peoples and government which works toward repairing the fractured fabric of our people caused by the devastating ripple effect of the residential school system. First and foremost, the 94 calls to action as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). Senator Murray Sinclair, speaking in his previous role as Chief Commissioner of the TRC, stated that, "Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one… Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed." The TRC's Calls to Action places the lens of responsibility and stewardship on each and every one of us to take up our own initiative, whether on a national level or in an elementary school classroom. The work undertaken by the TRC carries on the legacy of RCAP, reminding all Canadians that achieving reconciliation should be a welcome challenge.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has been long overdue. There is perhaps no other issue facing Indigenous people that so encapsulates the damage inflicted upon them by the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, and systemic racism.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is another effective tool for governments to exercise their

obligation to engage and consult with Indigenous organizations.

The challenge of reconciliation and the realization of promise took further shape for CAP's constituency on April 14, 2016 when the Congress won a historic victory with the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1999, CAP's former National leader, the late Harry Daniels went to court to force the federal government to acknowledge that Métis and non-status Indians are indeed 'Indians' under Section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act* and that the government has a fiduciary responsibility to them. It took the *Daniels v. Canada* decision to end the jurisdictional limbo of Métis and non-status Indians (MNSI) stuck in the passing of the fiduciary buck between the provinces and the federal government. This decision has enormous practical utility for our people.

In 1996, the Commissioners of RCAP stated, "We directed our consultations to one over-riding question: What are the foundations of a fair and honourable relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of Canada?" Twenty years on, the answer to this is for governments to honour their commitment to Indigenous Peoples for open and mutual engagement and consultation on all policy issues. Federal, provincial and territorial governments and National Indigenous Organizations must cooperate in order to create solutions for our people now.

We are all in this together. We truly do share the land and share a future together. It should include every single one of us so that, when we look back on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples again in twenty years' time, we will be able set aside the time to not only discuss the challenges ahead but to celebrate the accomplishments that we have achieved in the name of reconciliation.





THE *DANIELS SYMPOSIUM* — The First Step Towards True Reconciliation

By Brad Darch

As a result of the Supreme Court of Canada's (SCC) landmark decision *Daniels v. Canada*, on April 14th, 2016, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) has repeatedly advocated for the Government of Canada to address the needs and interests of off-reserve Métis and Non-Status Indians (MNSI) in accordance with the SCC's ruling that Métis and Non-Status Indians are "Indians" under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982. The ruling confirms Canada's fiduciary responsibility to Métis and Non-Status Indigenous Peoples.

On March 22nd and 23rd, 2017, the Congress held the *Daniels Symposium* in Ottawa, Ontario. The overall purpose of the symposium was to bring together a representative cross section of CAP's grassroots constituency for a two day engagement on *Daniels* regarding what the SCC's decision means for the MNSI of Canada. The symposium focused on what the 'next steps' should be in respect to advocacy, policy and program development for MNSI and the federal government.

The *Daniels Symposium* provided a forum for focused discussions on building a greater understanding of membership, programs/services, misconceptions and potential avenues to bring about positive changes for the community. The event provided a platform for progressive dialogue that would produce greater insights on grassroots needs and concerns, mobilize future legislation, and address strategies to improve the lives of the Congress' constituency.



CAP National Chief Robert Bertrand gave a welcoming address which focused on the paramount need and requirement for reconciliation between the federal government and MNSI Peoples:

"Reconciliation starts with inclusion. As inclusion is key to repairing the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples, government must include the advancement of rights and legislation for our people, regardless or status or residence, in all present and future policy development and implementation."

At a fireside session with the Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Minister Bennett stated that she was glad to have the symposium as a kind of pan-Canadian event. Such events are important in order that the "broad range of perspectives is taken into consideration".

The Minister spoke about the ongoing process between INAC and CAP regarding the approval and implementation of a renewed Political Accord. Referring to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's promise to renew the relationship with Indigenous people, the Accord will be grounded in the need for true partnerships and grassroots connections.

Minister Bennett also reiterated that the federal government wants to be a true partner with CAP as they move forward. The deliberations stated at the symposium will be taken very seriously in a "genuine relationship."

Following a video tribute to the late Harry Daniels, Mr. Daniels' son, Gabriel, spoke to the audience. Reflecting about his father, Gabriel cited that for Harry, his decision to enter politics was to get the land back for his people. What Harry Daniels accomplished with the *Daniels* case has given CAP the ability to do so and this was something that Gabriel stated should be the focus of CAP's leadership.

Top: Speaking during the *Daniels Symposium*, (left to right) Nigel Newlove, Chief Bertrand and Minister Bennett. Bottom: Gabriel Daniels





Todd Russell, President of NunatuKavut, gave the keynote address. President Russell affirmed that the *Daniels* decision is part of the solution and that solution is about a relationship with the Government of Canada, a true one about reconciliation. He further stated that the decision marks a way forward and that the way forward is one of action, and a call to action by the SCC. President Russell affirmed that CAP's grassroots members are nothing without their land, "Our people still hunt and fish, forage, pick medicines, etc. It is these things that connect us and make us who we are."

Reinforcing that the *Daniels* decision belongs to CAP, President Russell stated that CAP has to be at the negotiating table, that distinctiveness is not a barrier to inclusion and that there is not just one type of Indian, Métis, Inuit; that we all have a place.

The *Daniels* decision was the Supreme Court's call to action and they framed it as part of the journey of reconciliation. CAP needs to make sure that the federal government's actions live up to their words and move from the battlefield of the court to tables of opportunity for our people.

Over the two days of the event, CAP undertook three discussion panels and two breakout sessions where participants were asked to provide their own ideas for next steps concerning the *Daniels* decision.

The *Daniels Symposium* saw large numbers of people from all regions and ages voice their concerns and priorities. A message written down on a napkin and submitted to CAP by an attending participant at the close of the symposium read: "Grassroots are being left behind – how can we lift people out of Indian Act despair?"

This question encapsulates the distinct sense of urgency that hundreds of thousands of Indigenous People are feeling today. The final ruling rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada on *Daniels v. Canada* is the key to ensuring that each and every Indigenous person in this country has equal access to the same rights, programs and services, and the Government of Canada cannot turn their back on anyone.

> "Grassroots are being left behind – how can we lift people out of *Indian Act* despair?"

Discussions emanating out of the three panels and breakout sessions reflect a need for Indigenous grassroots people to work together to determine their own priorities as they relate to the *Daniels* decision. These priorities must be communicated with the federal government through the establishment of an ongoing dialogue with CAP and its constituency.

Participants felt there was a need for further examination of identity and defining membership to determine as to how the MNSI will be recognized by the federal government going forward. In regards to programs, services, and initiatives, there is a need for sustained long-term funding which includes the accommodation of service mobility; this being vitally important for off-reserve Indigenous Peoples as a large percentage end up falling through the jurisdictional cracks when transitioning from an on-reserve to an off-reserve urban, rural, or remote setting.

Furthermore, the maintenance and creation of programs and services should incorporate traditional values, be evidence-based, and include access to training.

As a result, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples must take a leadership role and be an active participant at the table with the federal government. To do so requires further government support through human and financial capacity supports for CAP and its PTOs. Symposium participants also felt that as a national Indigenous organization recognized by the Government of Canada, CAP should work equally with Federal,





Top: Speaking during the *Daniels Symposium*, President, Ontario Coalition of Indigenous Peoples, Brad Maggrah. Bottom: Chief Lisa Cooper of Native Council of PEI

Provincial and Territorial governments to have the interests of all off-reserve Indigenous Peoples represented.

The questions, answers, and results from the discussions led at the *Daniels Symposium* clearly illustrate the need for overdue and positive change in regards to the Government of Canada's responsibility towards the Métis and Non-Status Indians and the resulting working relationship that should be implemented through the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples.

There is an immediate need for solutions which are long overdue. The injustices stretch back to Confederation. In this anniversary year, the Government of Canada needs to follow through on their promises for reconciliation.

In Daniels, Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella stated:

"As the curtain opens wider and wider on the history of Canada's relationship with its Indigenous peoples, inequities are increasingly revealed and remedies urgently sought. Many revelations have resulted in good faith policy and legislative responses, but the list of disadvantages remains robust. This case represents another chapter in the pursuit of reconciliation and redress in that relationship."

An opportunity for such a remedy lies in honouring the Supreme Court's final decision on *Daniels* and for the federal government and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples to come together under progressive reconciliation in the form of equal rights recognition, programs and services, engagement, and consultation on all issues affecting our people. The ideas and questions taken from the *Daniels Symposium* will provide the government with concrete ideas on how to approach CAP's victory with *Daniels v. Canada* through the evolution and implementation of a renewed working relationship.



Awema Tendesi from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg dancing at the *Daniels Symposium*



RIDING THE RANKS

By Nigel Newlove

To say that Betty Ann Lavallée has strong connections to the Canadian military would be an understatement. "Both my grandfathers fought in the Second World War, as did numerous uncles" Lavallée says. "My father served, my husband is in (the military), as is my son."

Lavallée is the former National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. She served as National Chief from 2009 to 2015. But long before she served as National Chief, she was serving her country in the Canadian military.

Lavallée, who is Mi'kmaq, was born in Ottawa but spent most of her childhood at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Gagetown in New Brunswick. She began her military



career in 1979 in Fredericton. She also spent time in CFBs Cornwallis and Borden (in Nova Scotia and Ontario, respectively) as she worked her way up to the rank of Master Corporal.

"It gave me a sense of discipline, of how to deal with difficult people," Lavallée says. But Lavallée had difficulties of her own. "At the time, I was working three jobs and trying to support a young fella," Lavallée says. "It was difficult to have to leave him behind to do this. But, you know what? That's the only thing that got me through it."

Despite the opportunities the military presented, Lavallée says there were obvious problems for Indigenous members. "A lot of veterans when they came back unfortunately lost their status – therefore they weren't entitled to go back to their home reserves," Lavallée says. "One fella I served with was notified by Indian Affairs that he had to return to his reserve or he'd lose his rights. So he left."

> "It gave me a sense of discipline, of how to deal with difficult people"

There were other problems that didn't discriminate based on skin colour. Lavallée says she and others were exposed to a dangerous drug while serving in the military. "Starting with Afghanistan, Rwanda and Somalia, you had to take mefloquine before going overseas," Lavalée says. The Canadian Forces' use of mefloquine, an anti-malaria drug, became controversial following the 1993 Somalia Affair, in which Canadian soldiers killed unarmed Somali civilians. People in both the press and Parliament speculated mefloquine's psychiatric side-effects may have played a role.

Nonetheless, Lavallée is proud of the time she served in the Canadian Military. She often wonders how she did it. "If someone had told me when I was younger that I would have done this, I would have said, 'Forget it.'"

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CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES
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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

By Amy Nahwegahbow

Throughout the year, the Congress attended global conferences such as the United Nations (UN) special forums, sessions and treaty bodies. The Congress' participation at these events have helped build and strengthen, new and existing partnerships, alliances and coalitions to foster effective mechanisms and means of holding the Canadian government accountable to the commitments they have made on Indigenous issues.



Chief Bertrand and Minister Bennett with the Canadian delegation at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

2016 United Nations Climate Change Conference

National Chief Bertrand attended the 2016 UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco from November 7 to 18. He participated in a high-level panel, hosted by Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, that focused on Indigenous leadership and community actions to combat and adapt to climate change in Canada.

This international conference brought together political leaders and activists to discuss environmental issues and produce global solutions to combat climate change. It incorporated the twenty-second Conference of the Parties (COP22), the twelfth meeting of the parties for the Kyoto Protocol (CMP12), and the first meeting of the parties for the Paris Agreement (CMA1).

At this conference, Minister McKenna reaffirmed Canada's commitment to reconcile with Indigenous peoples and implement the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), strengthen engagement and collaboration with Indigenous peoples on international climate-change issues and solutions. McKenna said "Indigenous peoples are not just on the forefront of climate-change impacts, but also climate-change solutions".

> "Indigenous peoples are not just on the forefront of climate-change impacts, but also climate-change solutions"

2017 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

National Chief Bertrand was present among the many Indigenous leaders, Elders, and representatives in attendance at the 16th Session of the UNPFII that took place from April to May 5 at the UN Headquarters in New York. This year marked the 10th anniversary of the UNDRIP. At

this UN Session, Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), announced that Canada was withdrawing the government's previous concerns about two aspects of the Declaration that deal with "free, prior and informed consent".

2017 United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)

Duane Morrisseau-Beck, Senior Manager at CAP was awarded a full scholarship to attend the Indigenous Fellowship Programme; a four-week UN Indigenous training initiative that resulted with his full participation at the 10th Session of EMRIP that took place 10 to 14 July 2017 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

To appreciate the instruments, mechanisms and bodies that guide the work of the UN and enable indigenous peoples to fully participate in UN processes, Mr. Morrisseau-Beck was introduced to many human rights experts and representatives including: Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Kate Gilmore, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights; and national and International renowned human rights defender Chief Wilton Littlechild. The programmes rigorous itinerary provides numerous workshops, tours and training sessions all aimed at ensuring a full understanding of the UN from theory to application. The Indigenous Fellowship Programme offered by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights is offered every year through an application based process. Mr. Morrisseau-Beck received a certificate and is the first Métis to attend this prestigious programme.

For more information: **www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/Pages/Fellowship.aspx**

2017 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Roger Hunka, Director of the Maritime Aboriginal Aquatic Resources Secretariat in Nova Scotia, participated as a CAP delegate at the 93rd Session of the UN CERD on August 14-15. At this Treaty body Session, Canada's report was examined including actions taken by the federal government to uphold the principles embodied in the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, in particular as it relates to Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Canada was under review for its initiatives and measures for combating racial discrimination and relationship with its Indigenous Peoples. Reports from Canadian civil society organizations were submitted including issues such as Indigenous child welfare, implementation of the UNDRIP and discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls.



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For more information please feel free to contact Rufus Jacobs or Rob Russell at:

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